

# THE VISITOR

February 2022

**The Congregational Church of Austin    United Church of Christ**

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**Rev. Amelia Fulbright**

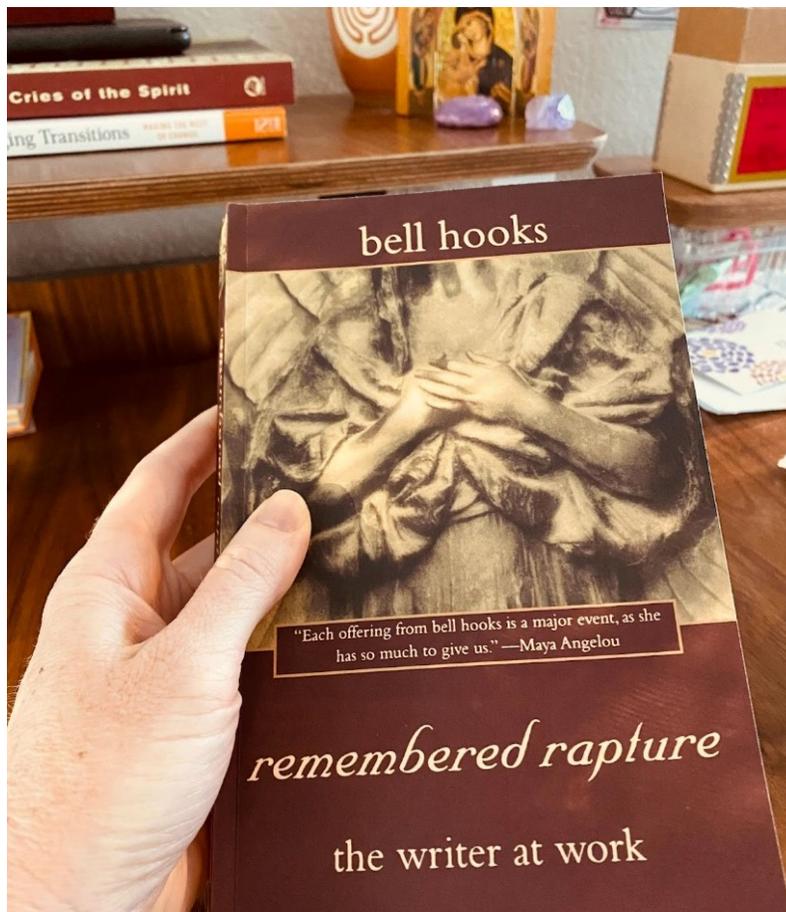
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**“Maybe they think we’re ready?”**

Rev. Amelia Fulbright

(This article originally was featured as iACT’s Daily Dose of Hope blog on Monday, January 24, 2022.)

*"God created order out of disorder, cosmos out of chaos, and God can do so always, can do so now--in our personal lives and in our lives as nations, globally. ... Indeed, God is transforming the world now--through us--because God loves us." — Desmond Tutu, God Has a Dream: A Vision of Hope for Our Time*



In mid-November of 2021, I attended a writing workshop where we drew from the work of the late bell hooks as a guide for our conversations. I remember thinking at the time what a wise and prolific writer she was and how reassuring it was to know that she was still alive, still with us. About a month later, on December 15,

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**bell hooks** died, transitioning from this earthly life to the life that is to come. Just days later, Archbishop **Desmond Tutu** passed away, followed quickly by Texan **Sarah Weddington**, well known as the attorney who argued and won the landmark **Roe V. Wade** case in front of the US Supreme Court. More recently we lost the barrier-breaking actor and activist **Sydney Poitier**, beloved actor-comedians **Bob Saget** and **Betty White**, and then the peace activist and spiritual master **Thich Nhat Hanh**.

When Archbishop **Tutu** died, I recall thinking that I still was grieving bell hooks and wasn't nearly ready to process the death of another spiritual teacher. Collectively, we have had so many deaths to process in recent years, so many wise saints moving on from this earthly plane, and we are in such a critical moment. The trials of the pandemic and the seismic cultural shifts we all are enduring make me feel like this is precisely the time when we need them the most!

But lately I've been wondering: *Maybe they think we're ready, ready to incorporate the wisdom they taught us and practice the teachings they gave us in order to repair the brokenness of the world.*

There is a story in the Christian tradition where **Jesus'** disciples are standing on the ground, staring into the sky, as **Jesus**—their teacher and guide—ascends into heaven. I imagine they, too, might have felt a little panicked, even abandoned. It takes them a while to regroup and reorganize, but ultimately that moment of loss when **Jesus** leaves them behind becomes the moment when Christ's church begins to be born. **Jesus** knew his work was done, and it was time for his disciples to do theirs. They were ready.

Maybe we are, too. And the truth is—the prophets and teachers who have gone before us are never really gone. They live on as ancestors, as saints, as the great cloud of witnesses, guiding us and encouraging us through the transcendent power of God.

I'm grateful for all those who have gone before us and also for my own turn to do God's work.

## March Visitor Deadline February 23, 2022

### Church Leadership

Deacons Chair	Jen Howicz
Outreach Coordinator	Whit Bodman
Moderator	Joy Penticuff
Treasurer	Pam Tucker
Financial Secretary	Jaime Hadley
Christian Education Coordinators	open
Youth Sunday School	open
Clerk	Reuel Nash
Historians	Pat & Mel Oakes
Webmaster	Mel Oakes
Member-At-Large	Bill Beardall

**Heart of Texas Association News**  
**February**  
**by Nikki Stahl**

Greetings Association Members,

I don't know about you, but I am so thankful that January is almost over! COVID hit our house pretty hard, but thankfully we are on the mends. I know your families, church communities, and others ministry settings have been hit hard as well. I echo the message that I am hearing all across the Association and beyond: **We will get through this!** I know it's an old and tired message, but think about how the Israelites must have felt hearing the same message for 70 years while they were in exile in Babylon. **We will and we are getting through this!**

First, a bit of news from around the Association

- Weimar UCC will vote on their settled minister Sunday, January 23rd.
- The Committee on Ministry is meeting on Thursday, January 27th and we continue to have a consistent flow of individuals interested in entering the MID process or other authorized minister credentials.
- Touchstone UCC is meeting Sunday, January 30th to vote on their first constitution and bylaws. This is one step in becoming a recognized congregation with full standing in our Association.

Don't forget these upcoming events:

- February 1st at 9:30 am HOTA Clergy Gathering
- February 2nd at 7:00 pm HOTA Church Leaders Gathering
- February 3rd at 12:00 pm HOTA Annual Meeting Planning

Remembering that we all sever different contexts, there are some great webinars/training coming up in February that may serve you:

- February 2nd at 3:00 pm MESA: MID Process
- Wednesdays in February at 7:00 pm Sexuality and the Bible 101
- February 3rd at 2:30 pm United Black Christians Celebration of Black History Month
- February 10th at 2:30 pm Reading the Bible Through Womanist Lens
- February 17th at 2:30 pm Becoming and Abolitionist
- February 23rd at 10:00 am Middle Eastern Christians in an Age of Empire
- February 23rd at 6:30 pm Stewardship Year Round
- February 24th at 2:30 pm Confronting Bias in Search and Call
- February 28th at 6:30 pm MESA: Pastoral Relations Committee

Also, I encourage you to subscribe to the Conference E-news that comes out on Thursday A lot of exciting things are taking place at the Conference level including gearing up for the Annual Meeting the last weekend in May where EVERYONE is invited to attend and to bring their families. More information really soon on that!

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**Heart of Texas Association News, cont.**  
**February**  
**by Nikki Stahl**

Remember to follow the Heart of Texas Association on Facebook or Instagram, if that is a thing for you. And I'm always here to answer questions, offer support and in general, just here for you.

Peace,  
Nikki

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[Website](#)  
[Facebook](#)

**Personals**  
**by Pat Oakes**

**P**am Tucker reports, "On December 23rd, **Savanna** and **Harrison** and I set sail for a holiday cruise in the Caribbean (Norwegian Cruise Line—Escape). The kids had always wanted to travel to the Caribbean and I thought the cruise was the best way to see the most. It was an exciting 11 day, 8 port excursion with exciting destinations and a luxurious ship. We had a very nice stateroom with a balcony, and we were surprised to find that we had a cabin steward assigned to our room (and 10 other rooms). He took care of cleaning the cabin and making the beds every day and folding down the beds in the evening. Of course, the room was small, so we didn't spend much time there except at night and getting ready. We were very pampered. The food was amazing and plentiful. There was huge buffet that was open almost 24 hours a day plus several other restaurants and some specialty restaurants. I enjoyed a lot of Indian cuisine and bacon every morning for breakfast. Bacon is my weakness! The kids had never seen anything like it, and it is not an exaggeration to say we were gluttons. The first port was Puerta Plata in the Dominican Republic. We went ashore and saw shows with dolphins, sharks, and sea lions, and we were able to swim with the dolphins. It was a fun experience even though they were in captivity. The next day we were in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The kids wanted to learn to surf, so they had surfing lessons. Neither had protective shirts (who knew?). They both ended up with board burns (like carpet burns) on their stomachs which lasted most of the trip and other people commented after seeing the abrasions that they had obviously been surfing. I opted out of that and did the city history tour on a bike. The guide was very good, and we got to see much of the old city including the oldest church in the Western Hemisphere, the Cathedral of San Juan Bautista which is 500 years old (if you count from the time construction was started). It has been beautifully renovated but still has much of the original artifacts and original areas in the church. St Maarten was the next stop, and we were all excited about this excursion. We had signed up to race on an older America's Cup boat against another America's Cup boat as crew members. We ended up in a Canadian boat and were to race against a U.S. boat. There was a lot of good-

natured banter between our two groups as to who would win. **Harrison**, **Sav** and I were primary grinders (the folks who turn the gears to raise and lower the sails quickly) for our boat. After some lessons about our job as a primary grinder, and information about the other roles of the crew and about the race, we were off. The wind seemed to be plenty for novices, but not too much. It's a good thing that we didn't have to do the grinding job continuously or my arms would have fallen off, but the work paid off and we saw the white flag waving for us--we won the race! This was a highlight for all three of us. In St. Lucia, we went to the sulfur springs in the crater of an old volcano near the St Lucia Pitons and had a mineral mud bath. The water was really hot and **Sav** nearly passed out. In Barbados we went on a large catamaran and went snorkeling. We saw sea turtles, but I also saw what I had already known--our oceans are dying. I have had the fortune to snorkel and see amazing underwater life, but it is dramatically different now and is very disturbing to see it first-hand. Our next stop was St Johns, Antigua where we had a zip line excursion, then to St Thomas, USVI to snorkel and see a shipwreck that was about 100 years old. The last port was the island owned by Norwegian Cruise Lines and we went to the beach to relax in beautiful weather with beautiful water. We had great entertainment on the ship including singing, magicians, comedians and a musical. We actually did not get to see the musical because they canceled it after the first few days. My guess is it was COVID related, but there is no way to know for sure. We were all tested at the port before getting on the ship, and we did have to wear masks and wash hands every time we entered for meals. It felt that they were doing everything they could to be safe. **Harrison** and I played Ping Pong on most days, and he played in two Ping Pong tournaments. I got up early every day and the kids stayed up late (lots going on all over the ship), a clear indication in the age difference! They get along very well and hung out together and met lots of people. **Sav** had asked me to go down the water slides with her, but **Harrison** is the one the ended up doing it with me. We went down the easy ones first and then we went on the biggest ones in which you start by standing up in the tube and waiting in anticipation until the attendant is ready to drop

**Personals (cont)**  
**by Pat Oakes**

the bottom out and you fall straight down the tube. Of course, I could not do it without screaming, but it was a blast. We got back to Orlando on January 3rd and headed to the airport. **Sav's** flight to Seattle left first and **Harrison** and I left later for our flight to Austin. I think it was a great time for everyone and we will have those memories always.”



12/27/21 The American sailboat competing against the Canadian sailboat the Tuckers were crewing on--in Phillipsburg, Grande Bay, St. Maarten



12/31/21 Harbor of Charlotte Amalie—Savanna, Harrison, and Pam enjoying their trip to the Caribbean



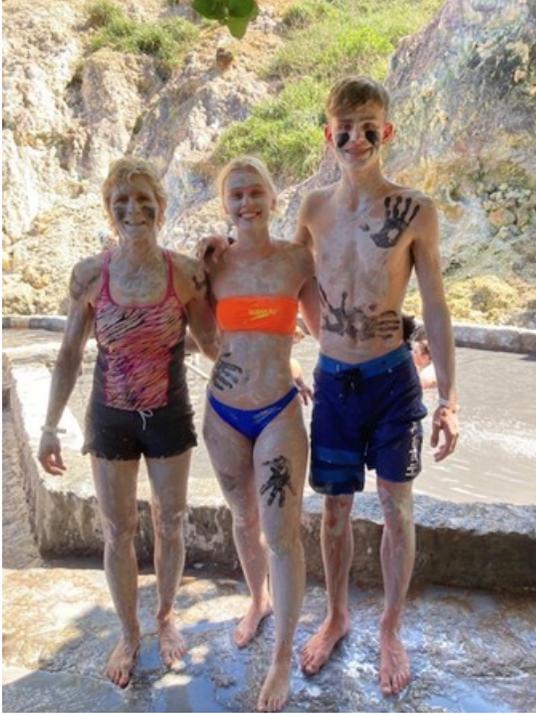
12/28/21 Savanna, Pam, and Harrison Tucker on the island of Saint Lucia



12/25/21 Swimming with the dolphins—the dolphin, Harrison, Savanna, and Pam Tucker all smiling

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## Personals (cont) by Pat Oakes



12/28/21 Pam, Savanna, and Harrison Tucker at Sulphur Springs, Saint Lucia

lurking. Anyway, they have remained healthy for the past two years, and **Andrea** is planning to work from home at least until we are down to Stage 2.



12/27/21 Andrea Low and her husband Paul Toyozaki had a great time in Charleston over the Christmas holidays

**Andrea Low** and her husband **Paul Toyozaki** spent the week over Christmas in Charleston, SC, enjoying the charm and southern cooking, but also examining our nation's troubling history. They stopped in at the Circular Congregational Church, an Open and Affirming, Just Peace congregation of the United Church of Christ. Unfortunately, they didn't have a chance to meet the minister, who is originally from Hawaii (where **Andrea** and **Paul** are originally from, too)! They also paid their respects at Mother Emanuel AME Church, where 9 parishioners in their Bible study were murdered by a white supremacist in 2015. They flew on Southwest Airlines. **Andrea** and **Paul** are from a small island where you can't even drive 1 hour away, so driving for more than a couple of hours is way too hard for **Andrea**! Flying seemed fine (masks required, alcohol prohibited/not served, no badly behaved passengers), as Austin was in Stage 3 at the time. The day after they returned, December 29, 2021, Austin Public Health moved Austin to Stage 4, and one week later, on January 6, 2022, APH moved Austin to Stage 5, where we remain at this writing. Maybe it was riskier than they had originally thought since the insidious omicron was

**Liz Nash** reports, "My month now in Montreal -- for Christmas and the birth of our second grandchild, **James** -- has been a major education in cold weather. Glad I don't have to walk far to be with our grandchildren and their (verybusy)parents. Lowest temp I have been in is -8 F. Tomorrow would be a balmy 23 F except for the major snowstorm with high winds. A few things I have learned -- blue jeans are useless, sock liners are great, face masks are good for staying warm, gloves plus mittens are a yes. All totally worth it. Over the moon to be with these grandkids. **James** is doing well. At first, I wore a mask when holding him because of COVID (people are generally being very careful up here and there are public restrictions that go along with that) and the fact that **Reuel** had a cold. But **Ellie** and **Louis** decided that the grandparents that aren't in contact with others don't need to wear masks. (All are totally on board with that.) So, **James** and I had quite a bit of "face time" when he was awake, grunting and making faces at each other. I won't be here long enough for him to smile, I think, but it's really neat. Also, I'm pretty much the person who is the nap time companion for **Vivi**. She is "all two", wanting Mama, testing limits, saying funny things, etc. Last two days she insisted on napping on the floor with me with her bean bag chair for a pillow - and many books read, discussion about what lights to have on, attempts to go see parents, etc. (delay tactics). But she finally settles

**Personals (cont)**  
**by Pat Oakes**

down and cuddles to fall asleep. I did, too, today. Been awhile since I could fall asleep on the floor. **Reuel** got home Jan 5. I'm supposed to be en route as I type (was to get in late tonight) but the first of my flights today had a problem with the door seal and had to turn around after takeoff to go back to Montreal. They had a hard time closing the door in the first place so we shouldn't have taken off. Anyway, after kind of a long evening I'm in a airport hotel and coming tomorrow. Lots of hassles with getting back through customs and waiting for bags that didn't appear, but the upshot is that I'm lucky to have a nice bed in a comfortable hotel with a good dinner. It is currently -7 F outside. Only a little warmer when I left **Ellie's**. I have a new perspective on cold after being up here!"



1/22 Sweet baby James sleeping peacefully at home in Montreal



1/22 Sweet baby James Rodgers had some snuggling time with his big sister Vivi and his grandmother Liz Nash in Montreal

The **Hernandez-Geer** family spent a great weekend at Lost Maples State Natural Area in Vanderpool, TX (about a 2 1/2-hour drive south and west of Austin on the Sabinal River). They like to try to do as many little weekend camping trips as they can throughout the year. **Xitlali**, whose 2nd birthday was Jan. 13th, a day after **Jonathan's**, wasn't terribly eventful since there was a case of Covid in her day-care class and she was quarantining at home with them for a week. But, on the bright side, they got to spend a lot more time together on their birthdays. They had a little gathering planned for her birthday last weekend, but they decided to postpone it because of their quarantine. **Jonathan** has refused to say "cancel" because Covid already took the first-year birthday gathering from them, too. They're hoping to be able to host a few folks in **February** to have a proper celebration. They can't believe she is two already though! It really does all happen so fast and they're trying to soak up every moment. She had a great time camping and she actually did a LOT of hiking this time. She even has her own walking stick!



1/22/22 The Hernandez-Geer family had a great time camping at Lost Maples--Roberto gave the family matching PJs

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## Personals (cont) by Pat Oakes



1/22/22 The Hernandez-Geer family had a great time camping at Lost Maples--Xitlali is a very happy camper!



1/22/22 The Hernandez-Geer family had a great time camping at Lost Maples--Roberto and Xitlali have the walking stick technique perfected!

Our pastor from 1989-2001 was Rev. **Yoshi Kaneda**. After he retired in 2001, he and his wife **Setsuko** moved back to the San Diego area where they had lived prior to moving to Austin. **Yoshi** writes, “**Setsuko** and I had never paid any attention to a peculiar name of the first woman missionary to Doshisha, Kyoto, Japan. **Alice Jeanette Starkweather**, a devout Christian woman from Hartford, CT (born about 1850), was chosen by the Women’s Board of Missions of the Pacific and sent to Japan at the young age of 26. She served as head of the girls school with 12 students at first. Fighting against and overcoming the walls of old Japanese culture, Shintoism, and Buddhism, **Starkweather**

(starting in 1876) deeply influenced her students and staff for seven years. She was the one who first instilled Christian ethics and values in education of Doshisha Women’s School, although she came back to the U.S. because of ill health. After many years of research Prof. **K. Sakamoto**, Professor Emeritus of Doshisha Women’s College, located the burial place of **Starkweather** at Mount Hope Cemetery in San Diego. She wanted to make certain and tried to find someone who lived there. Mrs. **M. Tamamura**, former President of Doshisha Alumna Association and a member of our Heian Sister Church, quickly suggested the names of **Setsuko** and me. On December 15, 2020, we received her mail, “**Starkweather** lived alone and died in a hotel room alone. I feel very sad. If possible, we would like to commemorate the centennial of her death next year.” One of many missionaries who was faithful and performed a great task at the very beginning of Doshisha had to die alone without any family members, relatives or friends in San Diego? Immediately **Setsuko** and I rushed to Mount Hope Cemetery and at the cemetery office a counselor identified her burial place in the old section with a locator map. A guide was provided and he took us to the very spot of her grave. There was no gravestone or monument, only brown grass. Yet, the locator map listed **Starkweather’s** name twice—one for her burial spot and other for the owner of that spot. Yes, she bought the spot while she was alive not to bother anyone else when she died. **Sakamoto** and I have exchanged emails for numerous times to establish an efficient communication line. In addition to her, two officers of the Alumna Association formed the committee to promote the project of establishing **Starkweather’s** monument. I served as a middle man. Conti & Sons Monument Co. was chosen, the size and color of the monument were agreed upon quickly. When we had to finalize its design and layout, however, we had to proceed very slowly. The photo of **Starkweather** was fuzzy and the print of the first school building had too many fine lines. A few experts were asked to help out to solve these problems. The pandemic caused an unexpected increase of orders for monuments and graves by families in San Diego. After more than a month of delay, the **Starkweather** monument was finally completed on August 4, 2021.

**Personals (cont)**  
**by Pat Oakes**

Alongside **Sakamoto**, I was invited to be a lecturer at the large ceremony to commemorate the centennial of **Starkweather's** death at Doshisha, October 2, 2021. I participated in the ceremony virtually to join in many grateful people there. If Mrs. **M. Tamamura**, our sister church member, had not been contacted, the whole project would never have happened. Blessed be the tie that binds!" Thank you for sharing that inspirational story, **Yoshi!**

have her mom there to help. **Baby Dierksen** is due on April 20th, but will likely come earlier. We are all praying that **Faye** makes it to at least eight months!



1/7/01 Yoshi and Setsuko Kaneda making retirement speeches in 2001

**Beth Gleason** started her six weeks of radiation on Monday, January 24th. She is getting the radiation treatments near home. She reports that it is going fine, so far. On day two she was making a visit to the local Goodwill store to drop off stuff for a friend. It has been very cold there and she misses our warmer temperatures. The lowest she has seen is -13 and on the 26th of January it was a balmy 30 degrees. Texts, e-mails, and cards would be much appreciated. Her mailing address is PO Box 156, Bar Mills ME, 04004 and her e-mail address is [RevBethG@gmail.com](mailto:RevBethG@gmail.com). She would certainly appreciate prayers, too.

It was great to see **Faye Dierksen** after church during Zoom visiting time on Sunday, Jan. 23rd. She was up and about a bit and we all had a good time waving at **Deek** who was cheerfully eating his lunch. She is mostly on bed rest and is so grateful to



1/20/22 Deek Dierksen in a contemplative mood



1/22 Deek Dierksen having a great time playing outdoors—covered in ashes from a broken chiminea

## History Corner by Pat & Mel Oakes

It turns out that the origins of the Women's Book Club are lost in the mists of time. Most agree that it probably started in the late 1990s, but we only have the lists of books that we read starting in 2002. There must be some information in issues of the Visitor (or church bulletins) which were done before we started doing the Visitor digitally. Who knew that they were starting something that has lasted more than 20 years! Further research will be done! If you would like to know more about the Women's Book Club, check out the link-- <https://www.patandmeloakes.com/PatandMelOakesFamilySite/WomensBookClub/> or call **Pat Oakes** at 512-627-1810. Our meetings have been on Zoom for the past two pandemic years, so folks who aren't here in Austin could join us (adjusting time zones as needed).

We do know that **Carol Barrett, Sara Ross, Barbara Burnham, Cathy Hubbs, Fran Briggs, and Lynn Lemley** were early members. If you are reading this and your name did not get included, let me know.



2004 The earliest Women's Book Club meeting photo that we have at Mary Sinclair's house in Austin--back--Lynne Lemley, Lisa Kirch, Maggie Smith; middle--Betsy Tylka, Sara Ross, Frances Alford, Tommie Pinkard, Pat Oakes; Carol Barrett, Cathy Hubbs, Sarah Kirch (Lisa's daughter), Mary Sinclair We had read ANGELS AND DEMONS by Dan Brown and Lisa came and showed slides of the art works featured in the novel—her only time to book club, so that narrowed down the date. Mary sent this picture which she found recently (at her home in Canada) which triggered the questions about the men's and women's book clubs.



12/5/06 Don Miles autographing copies of his book (first edition) for Cathy Hubbs and Tommie Pinkard at our book club meeting

## History Corner by Pat & Mel Oakes, cont.



2/2018 Left to Right: Carol Barrett, Lynn Chavarria, Sarah Bentley, Gail Christeson, Betty Bodman, Lynne Lemley, Geneva Ross, Sara Ross, Pat Oakes, Carolyn Thompson, Carol Burlinson, Nodie Murphy and sitting in middle, Barbara Burnham